

doesn't look like Swiss cheese, a state that provides hope. It's in—I believe it's in Israel's interest and the Palestinian people's interest to have leaders willing to work toward the achievement of that state.

People that can deliver that state, that vision, to the Palestinian people were sitting right here in the Oval Office, led by the President. The President is a man of peace. He's a man of vision. He rejects the idea of using violence to achieve objectives, which distinguishes him from other people in the region. I'm confident we can achieve the definition of a state. I'm also confident it's going to require hard work.

To that end, I'm going back to the Middle East. I'm looking forward to meeting you, sir. And thank you for making time. I consider you a friend. I also consider you a courageous person. And I'm also will consider—believe strongly that when history looks back at this moment and a state is defined, that the Palestinian people will thank you for your leadership.

There are a lot of issues we discussed, issues of importance: the security of the Palestinian people and the Israeli people, the economic advancement of the Palestinian people. The thing that I'm focused on, and you are: how to define a state that is acceptable to both sides. I'm confident it can get done. I want to thank you for coming. I appreciate your time.

**President Abbas.** Thank you. Mr. President, thank you very much for receiving us here at the White House these days. And I also would like to thank you very much for the initiative that was launched during the Annapolis conference.

We believe that you actually are truly seeking a true, genuine, and lasting peace in the Middle East. And I am certain that you would like to see an agreement and settlement before the end of your term. And at the same time, we are doing everything we can in order to seriously negotiate and reach a peace that will be satisfactory to both the Palestinian side and the Israeli side, a peace that would be promoted around the world.

There are many parties also that are working very hard to support our efforts and to help us reach that peace. When I talk about your initiative, Mr. President, I also have to

praise the Arab peace initiative—initiative that simply states that peace will be achieved after the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab and Palestinian Territories. As a result of that, I believe strongly that more than 57 Arab and Islamic countries will normalize their relations with Israel.

I believe very strongly that time is of the essence. We are working very hard and hope not to waste any time and continue these efforts to achieve peace.

Mr. President, your efforts, the efforts of your administration, the various visits—your previous one and your upcoming visit to Sharm el-Sheikh and to the region, all of this is a strong indication that you are very keen to continue to work very hard and to achieve your vision.

I cannot say that the road to peace is paved with flowers. It is paved with obstacles. But together we will work very hard in order to eliminate those obstacles and achieve peace.

**President Bush.** Thank you, sir. Thank you all. *Shokran gazillan.*

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:51 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. President Abbas spoke in Arabic, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

## Remarks to Members of the Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride

April 24, 2008

Thanks for coming. Doocy, thanks for the introduction. This has got to be one of the most inspiring athletic events in our Nation's history. At least it is for me, and I hope it is for you.

I was going to ride with the guys today, but Laura told me I probably wouldn't be able to keep up. [*Laughter*] I'm—there is no doubt in my mind the people behind me are some of the most bravest people in our country's history. I admire their courage; I admire their determination. We're honored to have you here.

I'm also joined by the Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. Thank you for coming, Madam Secretary. Secretary Jim Peake of the Department of Veterans Affairs is with us. Deputy Secretary Gordon England is with

us. Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, are here—other members of my administration and Members of Congress. The reason they're there is the same reason I'm here: We love and respect our military. And I thank you for coming.

I want to thank Granger Smith and the band for joining us today. Thanks for being here.

I appreciate those who wear the uniform who have joined us. I'm proud of you. Thanks for serving. I want to thank the wounded warriors. I want to thank their caregivers from Walter Reed and Bethesda. I appreciate the members of the Wounded Warrior Project. And I want to thank the family members and friends who are here today. Welcome to the White House.

Four years ago, Chris Carney decided to ride coast-to-coast to raise awareness and money for our wounded warriors. In the first year, he biked more than 5,000 miles from Long Island to the Pacific Ocean and raised more than a million dollars for the Wounded Warrior Project. He started what's called the annual Soldier Ride.

Next year, wounded vets started coming along. In 2006, 75 wounded warriors took turns riding portions of the cross-country journey. These service men and women rode to raise money for their fellow soldiers, including those who were hurt too much to ride. And they also rode to show themselves what they could do. And in so doing, they showed the world what they could do.

Americans came out to cheer. More soldiers and supporters came out to ride. More Americans then came out to show their support, so the Soldier Ride started doing different races around the country so even more of our citizens could participate. Today, hundreds of people have gathered here on the South Lawn to kick off this ride, and I want to thank you all for being here.

The 3-day bike ride you're starting today at the White House says a lot. It says that you're showing that even when you're wounded, you're not done fighting. One of the riders today is Marine Corporal Chad Watson. I've gotten to know Chad. I met him when I was at Walter Reed 3 weeks after his Humvee was hit with an IED on patrol in Fallujah. He lost his right leg; he shattered

his left ankle and foot; he took shrapnel to his face. And when I went into his room, he wanted to stand at attention and shake hands with the Commander in Chief, as well as salute.

He got up to his walker—his daddy helped him and so did his brother—he held himself upright with his arm strength while a fellow marine read his accommodation, and I had the honor of giving him the Purple Heart.

I told him to sit down. He didn't want to; he was a marine. And now he's here. He's got a new leg, and thanks to that leg, Chad will be able to start on even a greater journey than the one he begins today. This summer, he's going to walk down the aisle to get married to his beautiful bride. We're glad you're here.

The technology that you're witnessing today is helping our troops regain their lives. And it's state of the art, and that's the way it should be. We owe those who wear the uniform all the support they can possibly have. We'll give them the best medical care. And for the docs and nurses here, there's no doubt in my mind, our troops get the best medical care possible.

We owe them the best prosthesis. And if there's a new advance, it will be made available for our folks. We owe them a Veterans Health Administration that's seamless and works well. We owe them our thanks.

These service members are focused on what you have to give than what you've lost. I appreciate the spirit of those in the Soldier Ride.

I thank my fellow citizens for supporting our troops. I appreciate the fact that the families have stood by those who wear the uniform. I appreciate your loved ones who are here today to cheer you on. The riders represent the spirit of the strongest military in the world and the greatest country on Earth. I'm thankful that we have brave men and women like you who step forward to protect America. I'm proud to be your Commander in Chief.

And now let us get started. God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:26 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Steve Doocy, anchor, FOX News Channel "Fox and Friends"; Chris Carney, founder, Wounded Warrior Project Soldier Ride; and

Jillian Kinsella, fiancée of Cpl. Chad M. Watson, USMC.

**Statement on Armenian Remembrance Day**  
*April 24, 2008*

On this day of remembrance, we honor the memory of the victims of one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century, the mass killings and forced exile of as many as 1.5 million Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire. I join the Armenian community in America and around the world in commemorating this tragedy and mourning the loss of so many innocent lives.

As we reflect on this epic human tragedy, we must resolve to redouble our efforts to promote peace, tolerance, and respect for the dignity of human life. The Armenian people's unalterable determination to triumph over tragedy and flourish is a testament to their strength of character and spirit. We are grateful for the many contributions Americans of Armenian heritage have made to our Nation.

We welcome the efforts by individuals in Armenia and Turkey to foster reconciliation and peace and support joint efforts for an open examination of the past in search of a shared understanding of these tragic events. We look forward to the realization of a fully normalized Armenia-Turkey relationship.

The United States is committed to a strong relationship with Armenia based on shared values. We call on the Government of Armenia to take decisive steps to promote democracy and will continue our support for Armenia to this end. We remain committed to serving as an honest broker in pursuit of a lasting and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

On this solemn day of remembrance, Laura and I express our deepest condolences to Armenian people around the world.

**Remarks on the National Economy**  
*April 25, 2008*

Good morning. It's obvious our economy is in a slowdown. But fortunately, we recognized the signs early and took action. I signed

an economic growth package that will provide tax rebates to millions of American families and workers to boost consumer spending.

On Monday, the Treasury Department will begin delivering the first of these tax rebates by direct deposit. During the first week alone, nearly 7.7 million Americans will receive their tax rebates electronically. Then on May 9th, the IRS will begin mailing checks to millions more across America.

By this summer, the Treasury Department expects to have sent rebates to about 130 million American households. These rebates will provide eligible Americans with payments of up to \$600 a person, \$1,200 for couples, and \$300 per child.

If you've already filed your income tax return, your rebate is on the way. Even if you don't owe any income taxes, you may still be eligible for a check, but you need to file a form with the IRS. And it's not too late to do so. Now, you can find out information as to how to proceed by calling your local IRS office, or go to the IRS web site.

We want to make sure everyone who's eligible for a check gets one on a timely basis. This money is going to help Americans offset the high prices we're seeing at the gas pump; at the grocery store. And it will also give our economy a boost to help us pull out of this economic slowdown.

I'm pleased that the Treasury Department has worked quickly to get the money into the hands of the American people. Starting Monday, the effects of the stimulus will begin to reach millions of households across our country.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:16 a.m. on the South Grounds at the White House.

**Remarks During a Visit to the Northwest Boys & Girls Club in Hartford, Connecticut**  
*April 25, 2008*

**Entertainer Melinda Doolittle.** I would love—actually, Mr. President, I know that you went to Africa. I got a great chance to go to Africa with your wife and kind of see firsthand in Zambia what the disease does